

the American people are being pummeled by inflation, paying more for the things they used to pay less for.

What is the Biden administration's response? Well, the President's Chief of Staff, Ron Klain, dismissed inflation as something he called a high-class problem, which I guess means that only rich people are suffering or experience that inflation. Again, this is clearly not true. My constituents in Texas don't see it that way. They see inflation outpacing their wage increases and essentially giving them a pay cut. They are paying 10 percent more at the butcher counter than they were a year ago and 42 percent more on gasoline. If you are a senior operating on a fixed income, you have to spend more of that fixed income to end up with less.

So, no, this isn't just a problem for the high class. Unfortunately, it is not going away soon either. You remember when concerns were raised with the Federal Reserve Chairman, Jay Powell, about inflation, and he said: Well, it is probably only transitory—meaning it is a passing moment. Well, now we see that economists expect inflation rates to remain steady through the end of next year, which would mark the longest period of inflation above 5 percent in three decades. So if inflation is at 5 percent, that means you are having to pay \$1.05 to get what you used to pay \$1 for, and it is compounded each year.

While inflation is expected to ease some—or at least we are hoping and praying that is the effect—by the middle of next year, rates are still likely to be higher than they were before the pandemic.

Folks who can't afford to fill up their gas tanks to get back and forth to work or buy what they need at the grocery store don't need to be told that things are just fine when they know they are not. The American people need to see real leadership here that addresses the root causes of inflation, not pouring gas on that inflation as the \$3½ trillion reckless tax-and-spending spree would do. It would just create more money chasing the same goods and services, driving prices up. And the American people certainly deserve better than false statements that ignore the magnitude of their pain.

AFGHANISTAN

Madam President, as I have said before, we have seen this playbook again and again. Following an objectively chaotic exit from Afghanistan because of the President's arbitrary decision date, President Biden called the mission an extraordinary success. Well, we know that is not true. We can see that with our own eyes. We know that 13 brave servicemembers lost their lives in a terrorist attack, including a young marine named David Espinoza, whose funeral my wife and I attended in Laredo, TX.

Countless Americans and Afghan allies were left behind. We heard from the State Department today that they can't even tell us how many Afghans, who qualify for the special immigrant

visa, remain in Afghanistan, and we know now, with the Taliban in control, that they are hunting down people who worked with the United States during the last 20 years in order to prevent another terrorist attack like we experienced on 9/11/2001. And, no, the new Taliban is not better or a kinder, gentler version of the old Taliban.

So in no way could this be considered a success, let alone an extraordinary one.

And then there is the border. Ever since President Biden became President, his administration has either ignored, downplayed, or denied the humanitarian crisis at our border. For months, the administration wouldn't even talk about it; and when it did, there were very peculiar rules that applied, apparently, to how it should be discussed.

The administration refused to use the term "crisis" and came up with a range of euphemisms to downplay what was actually happening. They called it a challenge, a situation, a mess—all to, apparently, deceive the American people into thinking that what you are seeing with your own eyes is not really a problem.

The Secretary of Homeland Security took this deception to a whole new level recently. When testifying before a House committee last week, Secretary Mayorkas said the border is "no less secure than it was previously."

That is demonstrably false. The data tells a very clearly different story.

In the first 7 months of the Biden administration, more than 1.2 million migrants have crossed our southern border. That is an astronomical number, 1.2 million. To provide some context, in 7 months, Customs and Border Protection encountered 2½ times as many people as they did in all of fiscal year 2020.

So it is not getting any better if the Secretary of Homeland Security, whose responsibility it is to secure the border, says things are no worse off than they used to be. At the same time, he tells us that the numbers are unrivaled in the last 20 years. Both can't be true.

So whatever you want to call this—lying, misleading, or gaslighting—we have all had to learn a little bit of a new vocabulary. "Gaslighting" basically means creating your own alternative reality and trying to sell that as true.

None of this changes the fact that the Biden administration has consistently tried to deceive the American people about each of these matters. And the list actually goes on and on. The President and his administration won't even admit there is a humanitarian crisis along our southern border, let alone take the pretty obvious and necessary steps to address it.

Senator SINEMA from Arizona, a Democrat, and I, a Republican from Texas, working with HENRY CUELLAR, a Democrat from Laredo, and TONY GONZALES, a Republican who represents

the largest border district in the country, we presented the bipartisan border security plan, but the administration just looks the other way.

They won't acknowledge their massive failures in Afghanistan either, which resulted in the death of 13 servicemembers and left our allies, our friends, and their families in a lurch.

And they refuse to admit that their reckless tax-and-spending-spree bill is designed to fundamentally transform America and will drive up taxes not just for the wealthy, but for the middle class, and hurt our already wobbly postpandemic economy.

This is not what leadership should look like. The American people deserve better than getting scammed by their own President, no less.

If the administration put half as much energy in trying to solve problems as it does in trying to disassemble them or to cover them up, our Nation would be far better off.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

BORDER SECURITY

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, for the past several months, the Biden administration and their officials have devoted their time to one of two things: They have blamed Republicans for problems that they, the Democrats, created, or denying those problems exist at all.

As my colleague from Texas said: Don't believe what you are seeing.

That seems to be a common refrain.

Just last week, White House Chief of Staff Ron Klain retweeted the former Chairman of President Obama's Council of Economic Advisers when he dismissed rising inflation and collapsing supply chains as "high class problems."

Apparently, he thinks those sky-high prices at the grocery store only affect the rich. How wrong they are.

On this same day Ron was scrolling through Twitter, White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki insisted that the American people just started paying attention to their finances this year. Never before this year have they looked at their finances. She stood in front of the entire press pool, dismissed serious economic pain as a passing concern, and tried to spin the memory of the prepandemic, pre-Biden economy out of everyone's memory.

Last week, I saw firsthand the consequences of this policy of deflection. Let me tell you, if you want to see what it looks like when our government undermines and abandons entire communities, you need look no further than our Nation's southern border.

What I saw during my recent trip to south Texas was a humanitarian crisis, a healthcare crisis, and a national security crisis. And make no mistake, nothing that is happening down there is the result of some unfortunate accident.

This is no everyday failure of leadership. If our so-called border czar cared